

**on the
COVER**



The American Alligator, a south Florida native

Water levels are monitored and structures can be operated from our Operations Control Room in West Palm Beach

Removing exotics such as melaleuca is very labor-intensive

Staff and volunteers planted native trees and plants when Lake Okeechobee reached historic lows

Community events often feature District staff as speakers or participants

Inside one of the huge pump stations that helps the District manage the flow of water



Forging Partnerships in Central Florida



“As we continue to work to restore and revitalize the interconnected Kissimmee-Lake Okeechobee-Everglades ecosystem, the District is also pursuing partnerships on all levels for the benefit of the water resources of the central Florida area.”

— **HARKLEY THORNTON**
GOVERNING BOARD MEMBER

Take a ride on the Kissimmee River. You will see migratory fowl returning to the river for the first time in 40 years. You will witness a rich variety of wading birds. Little blue herons, wood storks, white ibis and limpkins are back in awe-inspiring numbers.

Gators sun themselves on the riverbanks. And the anglers are back, confident that their luck has improved with the river's improved habitat. What you won't see, but is there nevertheless, are the improved levels of dissolved oxygen critical to the river's re-emerging game fishery.

You may also not notice all the little critters that support the bottom of the food web and are found only in healthy, flowing river systems in the Southeast United States. But they, too, are there.

While years of work remain, and many more years of monitoring must be completed before success can be fully declared, the initial results are indeed impressive and encouraging. In just two years – a blink of an eye in the ways of the natural world – we are seeing positive changes.

When complete, 22 miles of the channelized Kissimmee River will be filled in, returning flow to more than 40 miles of the river's original meandering course. More important, much of the historic floodplain will again function much as nature intended.

Building on our long-standing federal and state public works partnership, the South Florida Water Management District and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers are working in concert with Mother Nature to move this monumental river restoration project forward. The initial success of this collaborative and unprecedented effort provides critical experiences and lessons learned for implementation of the far-reaching Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan – the most ambitious environmental restoration project ever undertaken.

As we continue to work to restore and revitalize the interconnected Kissimmee-Lake Okeechobee-Everglades ecosystem, the South Florida Water Management District is also pursuing partnerships on all levels for the benefit of the water resources of the central Florida area.

In Orange County, a cooperative effort with local government is improving flood protection and the quality of water that ultimately flows to the Kissimmee River.

In Osceola County, our work is helping protect the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes, which are critical to the quality of life in central Florida and the health of the downstream natural systems.

In Polk County, the acquisition of the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes floodplain assists in the river

restoration while enhancing regionally significant fish and wildlife habitat.

And throughout the greater Kissimmee basin region, we are peering 20 years into the future to ensure the long-term sustainability of the central Florida water supply. This long-term initiative requires input and involvement from cities, counties, other water management districts, other government agencies, private industry, interest groups and the public.

As we enter an era of tremendous growth in central Florida, the South Florida Water Management District will continue to work towards meeting the challenge of ensuring the protection of our water resources for our benefit and the benefit of generations to come.

Everglades Status Report

The South Florida Water Management District and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection announce the publication of the peer-reviewed 2003 Everglades Consolidated Report. The report, the fifth in an annual series, is a cooperative effort by these agencies to comply with reporting obligations under the Everglades Forever Act and to support water resources decision-making in south Florida.

The welcome news: Resource management programs in the Everglades continue to make excellent progress toward achieving water quality and restoration goals. The report documents in scientific detail some exciting findings, such as:

For the third consecutive year, wading bird nesting in southern Florida was very successful with an estimated 68,504 nests, up over 80 percent from last year's active nesting.

The Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan is progressing on many fronts as dozens of projects are planned and implemented.

Agricultural management in combination with stormwater treatment areas continue to perform above required levels of effectiveness in reducing phosphorus from water moving southward into the Everglades Protection Area.

The complete 2003 Everglades Consolidated Report, which includes an executive summary, scientific report and appendices, is available on the District's web site at www.sfwmd.gov/org/ema/everglades. Printed copies are available by calling the District's Technical Publication office at (561) 682-6745.

Governor Recommends \$300M for Everglades Land Acquisition

Recognizing the need to develop a dedicated source of funding for Everglades restoration while not incurring future indebtedness, Governor Jeb Bush's budget recommendations for fiscal year 2003-2004 earmark \$300 million from the Florida Forever and Preservation 2000 land acquisition programs. This proposal fulfills the state's commitment of \$100 million per year for Everglades restoration funding for the next three fiscal years.

Funding Available for Innovative Water Supply Projects

Grant Application Deadline: April 3

To help promote conservation, grants for capital or infrastructure projects are offered annually to local governments and other entities to implement cost-effective alternative water supplies. Program applications are now available and will be due before 5 p.m., April 3, 2003. Entities funded in previous years include cities, towns and water control districts – projects include reclaimed water for reuse, aquifer storage and recovery systems, reverse osmosis and large-scale irrigation projects.

A number of workshops have been scheduled at various locations around the District to inform and assist potential applicants about the Alternative Water Supply Program.

Two workshops were held in early February in Ft. Myers and Stuart. Additional meetings include:

February 27, 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. – SFWMD Headquarters
3301 Gun Club Road, Building B-1, 3rd Floor
West Palm Beach
1-800-432-2045 extension 6791 or 6444

March 5, 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. – Okeechobee Service Center
205 North Parrott Avenue, Suite 201 (Bank of America Building)
Okeechobee
1-800-250-4200

March 12, 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. – Broward Field Station
2535 Davie Road
Davie
1-800-432-2045 extension 4818

March 12, 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. – Miami-Dade Service Center
172A W. Flagler Street
Miami
1-800-250-4300 extension 7291

March 18, 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. – Orlando Service Center
1707 Orlando Central Parkway, Suite 200
Orlando
1-800-250-4250 extension 3837

For more information on the workshops, contact Jane Bucca at (561) 682-6791. Applications are available at District headquarters in West Palm Beach and at all of our Service Center locations. You may request a copy by calling (561) 682-6391 or you may also download the application online at www.sfwmd.gov/org/mso/pro/solicit.html